



# My School !

## Idaho Charter School Link

The Idaho legislature passed the Public Charter School Law with bipartisan support in 1998. In the decade that followed, charter schools have grown from a statewide total of 168 students, less than .5% of total public school enrollment, to 10,768, more than 4% of statewide enrollment. Interest in school choice among parents, educators and community leaders continues to grow.

**Charter schools provide parents an opportunity to respond to the learning needs of the individual child**, as well as to be intimately involved in the life of the school. In the fall of 2007, charter schools reported 6,981 children on waiting lists statewide.

**Charter schools empower teachers, providing an opportunity to build what researchers call "collective efficacy"**—the perception

that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on student learning.

According to an issue brief published by the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, teachers with strong perceptions of efficacy put more effort into planning lessons, are more open to new ideas, and persevere in the face of new challenges.

Strong collective efficacy has an impressive list of positive consequences:

**Improved Student Performance:** Perceptions of collective efficacy are strong predictors of academic performance. A one point increase in the efficacy measure translates to an 8.5 point increase in student scores.

**Offset Effects of Low Socioeconomic Status:** Schools with higher collective efficacy had stronger

positive relationships with mathematics and reading achievement offsetting the negative relationship associated with low socio-economic status..

**Enhance Parent/Teacher Relationships:** Teachers with strong CTE are more comfortable reaching out to parents. A staff that is confident in their own effectiveness welcomes parental participation because they believe they will be able to withstand challenges.

**Builds Teacher Commitment:** Collective efficacy is key to unlocking the talents of individual teachers and building on their commitment to the school's success. Research has shown that "groups with higher collective efficacy set more difficult group goals and [are] more committed to those goals." See full text at: [www.centerforcsri.org](http://www.centerforcsri.org).

## Upcoming Events— Charter School Seminars and Workshops

The Department is partnering with the Idaho Charter School Network to provide seminars and workshops for new charter developers and for experienced charter school operators on a range of topics that were identified on ICSN and SDE sur-

veys. Workshops have been conducted on topics such as business planning, school finance, school transportation, grant-writing, fundraising, developing a vision and mission, etc.

The seminars and workshops are designed to ensure

that new charter developers have the technical assistance necessary to design high quality charter schools—and to provide ongoing support to charter school leaders as they continue to provide high quality educational program-

### Inside this issue:

A Survey: School Choice in the State 2

Familiarity Breeds Content 2

School Choice Website 2

Statewide Charter School Conference 3

Charter School Support Program Grant 4

Statewide Charter School Conference (continued) 4

### Upcoming Events:

May 15 9:00 AM  
CS 4: Marketing and Communication Seminar

June 29 9:00-4:00  
ICSN CS Conference: Enhancing Quality

July 22 9:00 AM  
CS 5: Legal Advocacy and CS Law

August 13 9:00 AM  
CS 6: School Leadership and Governance

Sept. 24 9:00-4:00  
Charter Start 101 Full Day Workshop

## Idaho's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

There is demand for expanding school choice in Idaho. To seat all of the children currently on charter school waiting lists, schools would have to expand their capacity by more than 40%. In March 2008, the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice published the results of a poll of Idaho voters on a range of K-12 educational issues, including school choice. Key findings include:

- Only 12% of Idahoans say a regular public school is the top choice for their child's school.
- When asked "what type of school

would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?" Idaho voters chose private schools (39%), charter schools (25%) and homeschooling (21%).

- Idahoans like school choice reforms—67% express favorability to charter schools.
- Over half of Idahoans (59%) cite "academic quality" or "school curriculum" as the main reason they would choose a particular type of school as best for their child.
- Knowledge about charter schools in Idaho is relatively high com-

pared to other polled states. More than three out of every five Idaho voters (62%) are either "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with charter schools.

This poll was released jointly by the Friedman Foundation, Agudath Israel of America, Black Alliance for Educational Options, Educational Excellence Idaho, Hispanic Council for Report and Educational Options, Idaho Values Alliance, Micron Technology, Inc., and the Center for Education Reform. More information regarding the study and its research methodology can be found at: [www.friedmanfoundation.org](http://www.friedmanfoundation.org).

## Familiarity Breeds Content: As the Charter Movement Grows, So Does Public Approval

An issue brief published by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools in February 2008 notes that support from the broader public is needed if charter schools are to enjoy public policies conducive to growth.

According to Gary Larson, Principal at Larson Communications: "A review of recent national and state-level polling data suggests that as the movement is expanding and people are becoming more familiar with charter schools, support is growing as well." Larson cites several

national studies regarding changing perceptions of charter schools:

- *The Economist* in 2007 found that by a more than 2-to-1 margin, the public favors the expansion of the charter school movement.
- *Education Next* found an even greater margin of support, with the public favoring the expansion of charters by 42% to 14%.
- In 2000 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls noted that only 42% of Ameri-

cans favored charter schools; in 2007 that number had grown to 60%.

However, Larson notes that "an alarming rate of pure misinformation crops up in other findings." According to *Education Next* 3 in 5 Americans don't know that charter schools can't charge tuition or teach religion. "Those who would implement the charter school concept should ensure that the public has a clear understanding of such schools." The brief can be found at [www.publiccharters.org](http://www.publiccharters.org).

## State Department of Education School Choice Website

The SDE School Choice Website is finally operational: [www.sde.idaho.gov/beta/charter\\_schools/charter\\_schools\\_index.htm](http://www.sde.idaho.gov/beta/charter_schools/charter_schools_index.htm)

The site provides quick links to resources, tools and information for charter school operators, charter developers, charter school authorizers and the general public. The site, which should be complete by summer, will also include information about special populations of

students in charter schools, as well as links to the power points and handouts for all Charter Start Workshops and Seminars.

The *What's New* section on the opening page is updated regularly and provides up-to-the-minute information on events and opportunities for charter school leaders.

The Charter Schools page provides a direct link to each of Idaho's charter

school's websites to ensure that visitors have access to the most up-to-date information about each school, including a link to the most recent version of the school's charter.

Please take a minute to review the website. Suggestions regarding ease of use, additional information to include or problems should be addressed to the State Department School Choice Coordinator [sarau@sde.idaho.org](mailto:sarau@sde.idaho.org).

# **Charting a Course for Excellence:**

## **Enhancing Charter School Quality in Idaho**

### **Idaho Charter School Network Annual Conference**

#### **Thursday, June 19, 2008 Boise, Idaho**

.....

#### **A National Snapshot—Keynote Speaker**

**Todd Ziebarth, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools**

Todd Ziebarth is the State Policy Director for the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Todd will share a national view of charter schools and a look at how Idaho stacks up to other states. Mr. Ziebarth was a Policy Analyst at the Education Commission of the States from 1997 to 2003, where he worked with numerous states on public education governance issues, including charter schools. He worked as a Policy Analyst at Augenblick, Paliach, and Associates, a consulting firm specializing in educational finance, governance, and school improvement issues. Mr. Ziebarth has authored many national and state-level research and policy publications related to key charter school issues: caps, funding, authorizing, and achievement, among others. He is one of the foremost experts regarding charter school policies and practices throughout the nation.

.....

#### **Using Data to Enhance Quality**

**Kerri Pickett Hoffman**

Kerri is the Assistant Head of School for the Idaho Virtual Academy. Kerri has been active in many roles in the education field over the past 15 years, most recently serving as the Associate Director of the Boise State University Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies and the Executive Director for the Idaho Charter School Network. Kerri has been directly involved in the Idaho charter school movement since shortly after the Idaho Charter School Network was launched in 2001. She has taught in public K-12 and higher education settings since 1992, most recently in the Department of Educational Technology at Boise State University, where she taught educational technology courses to in-service and pre-service teachers and university faculty. Prior to service at Boise State University, Kerri taught 6th grade, 2nd grade and 9th grade in the Twin Falls School District.

.....

#### **A Teacher's Journey - Idaho's Teacher of the Year**

**Carol Scholz**

Carol is a teacher at Idaho Arts Charter School in Nampa. She was named the 2008 Idaho Teacher of the Year in a surprise assembly at her school in November. Scholz has more than 23 years of experience as an elementary and special education teacher. She goes above and beyond every day to find creative and innovative ways to help her students achieve success. Carol Scholz is now Idaho's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year award.

.....

#### **Your Message of Excellence - Marketing & Communications**

**Beth Geagan**

Beth Geagan, Balance Business Owner and Management Consultant, has managed all areas of business operations over the past 25 years. She works with local businesses, non-profits and municipal and state governments to help people and organizations develop effective strategies to sustain their lives, work and community. The Balance Business approach provides a framework that transforms the way business is conducted, and creates new models for a life-sustaining community. This approach focuses on the vision, culture, and process that drive results and success is measured by the impact decisions have on one's life, relations, work, community and world. Beth develops and implements organizational strategy and operating plans, facilitates workshops and provides mentoring services.

(continued on page 4)

## Idaho State Dept of Education

Shirley A. Rau  
School Choice Coordinator  
208-332-6963  
sarau@sde.idaho.gov

Lori Howard  
Administrative Assistant  
208-332-6902

P.O. Box 83720  
650 West State Street  
Boise, Idaho 83702  
Fax: 208-334-2228

(continued from page 3)

### Highlights of the Conference

- National and local experts share insights and knowledge to enhance quality in Idaho's charter schools
- Networking time with colleagues

from charter schools throughout the state

- Recognition of the winner of the charter school bookmark contest
- Vendors of special interest to Charter Schools display their products and services

### Meeting Agenda

- 8-9 AM Registration/Breakfast
- 9 AM Welcome and Keynote
- 10-12 Conference Speakers
- 12-1 PM Network over Lunch
- 1-3 PM Conference Speakers
- 3:30 ICSN Meeting or Charter Start Seminar: Writing the Petition

The meeting will be held at the Oxford Suites, 1426 S. Entertainment Ave adjacent to Edwards Cinema, Overland Exit off I-84.

<http://www.oxfordsuitesboise.com/guestsuites.php>

[estsuites.php](http://www.oxfordsuitesboise.com/guestsuites.php)

Oxford Suites features:

- Ample free parking, Free airport shuttles, walking distance to many dining/entertainment venues.
- A group guest room rate of \$99 per night for those needing overnight accommodations.

Rooms include free breakfast and evening reception. Call 208.322.8000 to make a reservation. Mention ICSN to get this rate.

This 2008 Charter School Conference is presented by the Idaho Charter School Network in cooperation with the Idaho State Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Choice and the Idaho Public Charter School Commission.

More information, including registration forms and related costs, are available on the Department website and on the ICSN website.

## Charter School Support Program Grant From Vision to Implementation

Since 1994, the U.S. Department of Education has provided grants to support state charter school planning and implementation efforts. (Title V, Part B, Subpart 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

The purpose of the Charter Schools Support Program Grant is to expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the nation by providing financial assistance for planning, program design, and initial implementation of public charter schools; evaluation of the effects of charter schools; and the dissemination of information about charter schools and successful practices in charter schools.

Idaho is in the final year of a three year grant cycle. A new grant application was submitted for the 2009-2011 grant period. If funded, the new grant will support 4 grant objectives:  
**Objective 1:** Promote the development of high quality charter school petitions in order to increase the num-

ber of high quality schools focused on high achievement for all students.

**Objective 2:** Evaluate and communicate the effects of Idaho charter schools on students, student achievement and parents.

**Objective 3:** Increase the number of new charter schools focusing student achievement efforts on underserved populations of students as defined by the state, particularly those high school students who are at greatest risk of not meeting challenging state achievement standards or not graduating.

**Objective 4:** Share best practices of high performing charter schools with demonstrated success at promoting student achievement.

CSP grant activities include:

- **Profiling Idaho charter school need** based on student age, SES, geographic area and type of charter, and creating a plan to focus resources to respond to specific needs.
- Expand availability of **Charter**

### Start Workshops and Seminars

- Develop the Idaho Charter School **Authorizer Manual and Orientation**.
- Develop a **Charter School Showcase Display** to be feature at educational venues throughout the state
- Draft an **Annual Charter School Report** that distills SDE data and NWREL finding to underscore the quality of Idaho's charter schools.
- Develop a **Data Academy** for charter developers and new charter schools receiving funds for SIS software
- Establish the **Charter School Advisory Team for Special Populations** of Students to disseminate research based models for promoting achievement.
- Implement the **Charter Stars** Program to recognize high performing charter schools throughout the state and to invite replication and sharing.